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STATEMENT ABOUT AN ATOMIC EXPLOSION IN THE USSR

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SOURCE FEIB (This strictly factual report is based solely on monitored foreign radio broadcasts received in Washington up to 7 a.m., 26 September 1949. It reproduces a report prepared in response to a special request.)

INTRODUCTION: To date, Radio Moscow's overt recognition of the President's announcement has been limited entirely to that contained in the official TASS statement which has been broadcast over more than 40 different transmissions.* The TASS statement has also gone the round of Soviet-controlled radios; but only minimal comment has appeared. Monitored Yugoslav broadcasts have not yet mentioned either the President's announcement or the TASS statement. Other radios outside the Soviet sphere, however, have been full of news and speculation--most of it following closely that appearing in the American press.

SOVIET-CONTROLLED COMMENT: Comment from the Eastern European Satellites is extremely limited. While Prague and Warsaw report that meetings in those cities greeted the TASS statement with tremendous cheers and enthusiasm, a talk by Czechoslovakia's Minister of Education Nejedly scores past British and American refusal to accept all Soviet proposals for international control. Referring to the current "excitement and alarm" in the Western world, he charges that because the bomb "has ceased to be the exclusive property of the U.S. and could be turned against her" the British and Americans are now contending that they always stood for atomic control. "The effrontery of reactionaries cannot be surpassed." As "worth particular attention," Warsaw calls attention to unidentified press statements linking Truman's announcement to alleged pressure on Congress to increase credits for armaments. The Soviet-controlled German radio, as usual, is less reticent. One commentator quotes a 1946 statement by Molotov to the effect that "it should not be forgotten that once the atomic bomb has appeared on one side there will be atomic bombs and some other things, too, on the other side." Citing Vishinsky's U.N. demand for prohibition of the atomic weapon, he notes that it came at the very moment when Truman's announcement "brought such a welcome sobering up with it." This "sobering up," he suggests, may have produced an "atmosphere in New York and the various capitals favorable to the peace front." Other broadcasts also point to the alleged change in America's tune. The SED paper is reported to have accused Truman of timing the announcement to coincide with the General Assembly meetings "in order to sabotage the peace." Among reactions of Communists in the Western world, Nenni and Togliatti are reported to have greeted the announcement as "peace news." But the French Communist HUMANITE charges

* Moscow's commentary-attention to the subject of atomic energy is limited entirely to Vishinsky's proposal for U.N. prohibition of the bomb and to alleged Anglo-American differences over atomic development. On Sunday, one commentator said that "the great event of the past week was the opening of the fourth U.N. General Assembly session."

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that while it is an "admission of the failure of the American policy of using the atom bomb for blackmail," the President's announcement "is evidently a cleverly planned campaign to develop a war psychosis."

COMMENT FROM THE NON-SOVIET WORLD: Reactions of radios in the non-Soviet world run the gamut of rumors and speculation. Relative to most of the major issues, however, they are in remarkable accord.

Do the Soviets have the bomb itself? There is practically unanimous agreement that they do. Most comment is based on this assumption, stated either explicitly or implicitly.

No surprise: It is pointed out repeatedly that eventual Soviet possession of the bomb was expected and that U.S.-Western policy was posited on this expectation. Little alarm is shown, but there is great seriousness.

Balance of atomic power: There are many statements pointing to continued U.S. superiority. Development of the first bomb is contrasted with the industrial potential needed to produce it on a mass scale. Little attention is paid to the presumed over-estimation of the time required for Soviet development of the bomb.

Need for control: There is complete unanimity on the urgency of adequate control. Comment is divided, however, on Soviet willingness to accede to such control. Continued Soviet refusal to permit inspection is predicted. But there are also expressed hopes that the USSR may be more amenable to negotiations now that they are on a more equal footing.

War or peace: Generally, two alternatives are presented. One follows the line of reasoning summarized immediately above, with suggestions that the atomic weapon may be outlawed just as was poison gas. On the other hand, there is speculation that with the bomb in Soviet possession the world situation may become more tense and inflammable, with an armaments race followed by atomic war and humanity's destruction.

Recommended Western policy: There is virtual agreement that current policy should be pursued and implemented. More American aid is recommended. There are few suggestions of appeasement. (The Damascus radio, however, reports that a "government source" in Iran has "declared that Iran must smooth her relations with her northern neighbors because when the sparks of war fly Iran will surely be the loser.") Greater efforts to achieve control are urged; but in the meantime and if these fail, the U.S. and West should work to maintain atomic supremacy.

How did the Soviets do it? Repeated references are made to Soviet utilization of German scientists who are given the major credit. The TASS implication that the USSR has had the bomb since 1947 is discredited in the few comments on the subject.

How was it discovered? Rife speculation refers to intelligence work, seismograph records, and instruments for measuring atmospheric radioactivity.

Timing of the announcement: Significance is seen in the coincidence of the announcement with the General Assembly meetings. There is speculation on the possibility of intended pressure on Congress for more military credits and more rapid implementation of the NAP. And some comments conclude that the announcement was made as soon as knowledge of the explosion was reliably established.

Predicted results: Less U.S. secrecy about atomic developments and closer Western cooperation. A 70-group American air force.

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